Recruitment from minority communities

3129. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is contemplating to incrrease the number of recruits from minority communities in the Army;

(b) if so, the details thereof, and the number of personnel recruited so far;

(c) whether any target has been fixed in this regard during the current year; and

(d) what is the rate of achievement of these targets?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (d) Armed Forces have a secular and apolitical character. Recruitment to the Forces is based on merit and is open to every citizen of the country, without any discrimination on the basis of their caste, creed, religion or region. All the personnel from all communities and regions work together without any distinction on the basis of caste, creed or religion.

Defects in BPVs

3130. SHRIMATISHOBH ANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Army has procured Bullet Proof Vehicles (BPVs) for its officers who are carrying out counter-terrorism operations in J&K and NE as reported in the media;

(b) if so, whether the Army Commanders are still not assured of safe and swift movement in their new Bullet Proof Vehicles;

(c) if so, whether CAG has found several flaws in the BPVs;

(d) if so, whether the Northern command and Eastern command have also pointed out defects in the BPVs; and

(e) if so, the corrective steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a)A contract for procurement of 200 Light Bullet Proof Vehicles was signed on 29.7.2005. Also, a contract for 9 Bullet Proof Vehicles was signed in February 2007.

(b) A problem with these bullet proof vehicles is the lack of adequate pulling power in mountainous terrain, for which a new engine is being trial evaluated. However, Commanders at all levels are confident of the protection and mobility provided by these vehicles. The vehicles are being effectively used in counter terrorism in Operational areas of Jammu and Kashmir and North East.

(c) The C&AG in Para 2.1 of their Report No. CA 4 of 2008 (Defence Services) have, *inter-.alia,* noted that the vehicles procured in 2005 have lower pulling power, unsuitable for cross country movement, overheating of tyres and losing advantage of bullet proof glass. In respect of the 2nd contract of February 2007, the C&AG has observed that procurement of these vehicles was effectively on a single vendor basis, even as there was an indication by Ordnance Factory, Medak (as per inputs received by the Integrated Financial Adviser) for supply of the vehicles at a lower price.

(d) and (e) During exploitation of 200 Light Bullet Proof Vehicles procured in July 2005, some defects were reported. A new engine is being trial evaluated. Also, a few minor defects as reproted by the Eastern Command in respect on 9 vehicles procured in February 2007, are being addressed by the Original Equipment Manufacturer.

Report of External Review Committee of DRDO

3131. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the External Review Committee of the DRDO has submitted its report;

(b) if so, the details of the recommendations made by the Committee;

(c) whether Government has studied those recommendations;

(d) if so, what action his Ministry has taken on those recommendations;

(e) whether it is a fact that the Committee recommended for private sector participation in Defence research;

(f) if so, the details thereof;

(g) whether any recommendations have been made with regard to administrative, financial and technological aspects of DRDO; and

(h) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (h) Yes, Sir. The External Review Committee of DRDO constituted by the Government to suggest measure for improving the functioning of DRDO *inter alia* Ministry of Defence, and Services has submitted its report to the Government of 5th March, 2008. It is under study of the Government.

Purchase of bullet proof vehicles

3132. SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether bullet proof vehicles were puchased in July, 2005 and February, 2007 from a private firm ignoring the cheaper offer from Ordnance Factory, Medak:

(b) whether the same were found defective;

(c) whether any enquiry is being conducted to find out how Request for Proposals (RFPs) are being issued to private firms without asserting the availability within the Ordnance factories; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) A contract for procurement of quantity 200 bullet proof vehicles was signed in July, 2005.

Separately, quantity 9 bullet proof vehicles were procured in February, 2007. During price negotiation for these 9 vehicles, there was an indication by Ordnance Factory (OF), Medak (as per inputs received by the Integrated Financial Adviser) for supply of the vehicles at a lower price. As the requirement was urgent and Ordance Factory, Medak had indicated